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INDONESIA/EAST TIMOR: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FEARS FURTHER DETERIORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

Amnesty International said today that the human rights situation in East Timor has not improved in the year since the Santa Cruz massacre, and that it will inevitably deteriorate further without fundamental changes in the Indonesian Government's policies and practices. The organization said the government had failed utterly to honour the letter and spirit of various United Nations statements and recommendations with respect to East Timor.

Summarizing the worsening human rights situation over the past twelve months, Amnesty International noted that:

- In the weeks prior to the anniversary of the massacre, the authorities arrested hundreds of suspected supporters of East Timor's independence to prevent them from publicly and peacefully expressing their political views.

- Torture and ill-treatment of political detainees continues to be both common and routine, and, despite its earlier promise to do so, the government has made little apparent effort to implement the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, whose report was published earlier this year.

- The government has sealed off the territory, preventing visits by international delegations and journalists, and most recently denying access to Amnesty International, although it had been urged by the UN Commission on Human Rights (UN-CHR) in March to "facilitate access to East Timor for additional humanitarian and human rights organizations."

- Despite the UN-CHR's expressed hope that it would do so, the government has failed to account for as many as 100 people who "disappeared," and has still identified only 19 of the more than 100 who were killed during and after the massacre.

- The government has meted out sentences up to life imprisonment to more than a dozen East Timorese for their peaceful political activities, in trials which made a mockery of international standards of fairness.

- In contrast to these heavy sentences, after the massacre the government brought only a few low-ranking soldiers to trial, all but one for disciplinary offences, and none received a sentence longer than 18 months.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre, Amnesty International called on the Indonesian Government to demonstrate its stated commitment to the future protection of human rights with concrete measures. It said that idle promises could no longer satisfy the international community.